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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20505

12 April 1974


MEMORANDUM FOR: The Director of Central Intelligence

SUBJECT : MILITARY THOUGHT (USSR): Improving the Readiness of
Tactical Missiles for Launch

1. The enclosed Intelligence Information Special Report is part of a series now in preparation based on the SECRET USSR Ministry of Defense publication Collection of Articles of the Journal 'Military Thought'. This article recommends the establishment of permanent alert status for a limited number of Soviet tactical missile units. Limitations imposed by gyroscope performance and liquid fuels preclude maintaining the units at launch readiness, but the permanent intermediate readiness state would mean having nuclear warheads at launch positions. In an initial nuclear strike lasting two to three hours, the tactical missiles in combat alert status would be launched at H + 20, second only to intermediate-range strategic missiles. This article appeared in Issue No. 3 (82) for 1967.

2. Because the source of this report is extremely sensitive, this document should be handled on a strict need-to-know basis within recipient agencies.

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William E. Nelson
Deputy Director for Operations

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Intelligence Information Special Report

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COUNTRY USSR

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DATE OF
INFO. Mid-1967

DATE 12 April 1974

SUBJECT

MILITARY THOUGHT (USSR): Concerning the Problem of Increasing the Readiness of Rocket Troops of the Front for Delivering an Initial Nuclear Strike

SOURCE Documentary

Summary

The following report is a translation from Russian of an article which appeared in Issue No. 3 (82) for 1967 of the SECRET USSR Ministry of Defense publication Collection of Articles of the Journal 'Military Thought'. The author of this article is Colonel V. Aleksandrov. This article recommends the establishment of permanent alert status for a limited number of Soviet tactical missile units. Limitations imposed by gyroscope performance and liquid fuels preclude maintaining the units at launch readiness, but the permanent intermediate readiness state would mean having nuclear warheads at launch positions. In an initial nuclear strike lasting two to three hours, the tactical missiles in combat alert status would be launched at H + 20, second only to intermediate-range strategic missiles.

End of Summary
 Comment

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There is no information in available reference materials which can be firmly associated with the author. Military Thought has been published by the USSR Ministry of Defense in three versions in the past -- TOP SECRET, SECRET, and RESTRICTED. There is no information as to whether or not the TOP SECRET version continues to be published. The SECRET version is published three times annually and is distributed down to the level of division commander.

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Concerning the Problem of Increasing the Readiness of Rocket
Troops of the Front for Delivering an Initial
Nuclear Strike*

by
Colonel V. Aleksandrov

According to currently accepted views, putting front rocket means into readiness for participation in an initial nuclear strike includes the dispatch and deployment of rocket troops, the assembly of nuclear warheads, and the supply of the warheads to the delivery vehicles. For all this, a certain amount of time is required prior to the initiation of combat actions.

To shorten this time, the author of the article under discussion admits the necessity, within the limits of the requirements for an initial strike, of maintaining delivery vehicles at readiness No. 6 in rocket brigades and warheads at special readiness No. 4 (SG-4) with a monitoring cycle carried out in a mobile rocket technical base. If there is a period of threat permitting missiles to be fully readied and delivered to rocket units, then the time required to put these units into full combat readiness will be shortened.

To further shorten this time, some authors consider it advisable to carry out the deployment of rocket units in the vicinity of their garrisons or a partial deployment during a period of threat under the guise of exercises.

It seems to us that the above-indicated ways of increasing the readiness of rocket troops of the front are far from providing a solution to the problem of their participation in the initial strike. It is well known that there may not even be a period of threat or that it will be very brief. And if there is a brief period of threat, it is doubtful whether the deployment of rocket units will be possible. Such deployment would not go unnoticed by enemy intelligence; it would reveal our intentions and might precipitate the initiation of combat actions under conditions disadvantageous to us. Moreover, the enemy retains, in all cases, the capability of delivering a surprise nuclear strike with his means on alert status against our rocket units and aircraft while they are at their permanent garrisons and bases or while they are moving forward (dispersing)

* Comments on the article by Colonel-General of Artillery G. Kariofilli in the Collection of Articles of the Journal "Military Thought", No. 2 (78), 1966.

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and deploying. This possibility is created by the higher degree of readiness of enemy nuclear means.

In our view, the most drastic method of increasing the readiness of a front for participation in an initial strike is to designate operational-tactical rocket troop units and subunits for alert status. These should be numerous enough to ensure the destruction, first of all, of the enemy nuclear means on alert status. The forces so allocated must be on combat alert status permanently and not merely from the moment the situation becomes tense.

In so doing, significant advantages are gained: it will become possible to destroy enemy nuclear means at a time convenient for us. Even under the most unfavorable development of events, the front will be able to participate with its means on alert status in the initial nuclear strike, either simultaneously with the strike of the strategic nuclear forces or after a minimum time gap (of from 20 to 30 minutes). The secrecy of preparations for aggressive actions is preserved to a greater degree, and measures which might reveal our intentions to the enemy are kept to a minimum.

It is true that this particular recommendation is sometimes objected to on the grounds that operational-tactical rockets are liquid-fueled and that their gyroscopic devices have a relatively short operating life, as a result of which the need will arise for frequent replacement of the rockets. It is well known that a delivery vehicle can remain in a fueled status for several months, after which the rocket must be launched or sent off to a factory for dismantling. However, rockets on combat alert status can, you know, be at readiness No. 2 or No. 3. At these readiness levels, the devices of the control system are not under voltage and therefore rockets do not require frequent replacement. A warhead can also be kept in a combat-ready status for a specific time period, after which a recheck at a mobile rocket technical base is required.

If the goal is set of opposing the enemy's operational-tactical rockets on alert status in the European Theater of Military Operations with our own rockets on alert status, then approximately 10 to 15 rockets will be required at any one time, and the yearly expenditure of rockets will amount to 20 to 30 units. This is obviously less than the number of rockets expended yearly for combat training.

Thus from the technical point of view, combat alert status is feasible, and from the point of view of economy it is fully justified.

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When solid-fuel rockets are put in service the situation will be simplified considerably.

The primary launch sites for subunits on combat alert status can be located at training centers, training camps, and firing ranges. These are restricted areas and within their confines the following are possible: engineer preparation of the launch site area to increase the degree of protection against weapons of mass destruction, organization of reliable protection and cover against air attacks, having stable and secure communications via various channels, organization of topographic-geodetic and meteorological support without attracting the attention of enemy intelligence, concealment of the very fact of the alert status, concealment of the rotation of subunits and the replacement of rockets, and also the creation of favorable conditions for the combat training of subunits on alert status. In our opinion, even setting up batteries on alert status right within the confines of military posts is not to be ruled out.

As for decreasing the time required to bring all the other rocket units which are not on combat alert status at the particular moment up to full combat readiness, let us, without broaching specific questions of a technical and organizational nature, point out what is paramount.

Here there can be two approaches: to position the assembly brigades of mobile rocket technical bases, with their supply of initial strike warheads at special readiness No. 5, together with the launcher subunits of the rocket brigades; or to store the first salvo warheads, at special readiness No. 5 right within the rocket battalions. Periodic technical servicing of the warheads can be accomplished by assembly brigade personnel right in the rocket brigades in accordance with the timetable.

✓ It seems that bringing the warheads nearer to the delivery vehicles and the launchers for operational-tactical rockets justifies itself, just as it has in the Strategic Rocket Troops and the Navy. Naturally, in this case, the following will be required: special measures precluding any unauthorized use of nuclear warheads, specific expenditures for capital construction of suitable magazines, and refinement of the organizational and personnel structure of the rocket units and rocket technical units. However, considering the gain in increasing the combat readiness, all of this cannot be considered an obstacle to the introduction of an alert status for operational-tactical rocket troops.

Allowing for the given recommendations, it appears to us that the pattern of the initial nuclear strike will take the following form:

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- at H-hour, the medium-range strategic missiles deliver a strike;
- at H + 0.20, the operational-tactical rockets from combat alert status and, at H + 0.30, the delivery-vehicle aircraft of the forces of front aviation on alert status, strike against enemy nuclear means;
- at H + 1.30, the remaining delivery-vehicle aircraft of front aviation strike against enemy troops on the march;
- at H + 2 to 2.30, the operational-tactical rockets not on combat alert status strike against targets pinpointed by aerial reconnaissance;
- at H + 2.00 to 3.00, the tactical rockets strike as they close with enemy troops of the first echelon.

In some cases, if the front is informed immediately before the initial nuclear strike of the time it is to be delivered: the operational-tactical rockets on alert status will be able to deliver a strike simultaneously with the Strategic Rocket Troops; the delivery-vehicle aircraft, 30 to 35 minutes later; the remaining units of operational-tactical rockets within the period from H-hour to H + 1.30; the main forces of aviation, from H + 0.30 to H + 0.50; and the tactical rockets within the period from H + 2.00 to H + 3.00.

Thus, the initial nuclear strike may last 2 to 3 hours.

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